

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 25, 2013

Honorable Mary Landrieu  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Senate Dirksen Building, 135  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Daniel Coats  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Senate Dirksen Building, 135  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Landrieu and Ranking Member Coats:

As the subcommittee begins consideration of an appropriations bill for the agencies within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Homeland Security, I respectfully request support for the programs listed below. The funding requested for the national programs is to be spent at the agencies' discretion within the existing budget line and is not intended for any specific business, state, community or other entity.

**1. Title:** Polar Ice Breaking Program - Operations and Maintenance

**Program Description:** Heavy Icebreaker Reactivation

**Fiscal Year 2014 President's Budget Request:** \$0

**Additional Amount Requested:** +\$30 million

**Budget Account:** Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard, Operating Expenses, Polar Icebreaking Program Operations and Maintenance.

**Rationale:** The Coast Guard has invested considerable sums in extending the service life of the heavy icebreaker POLAR SEA, but an engine casualty caused the cutter to be taken out of service in 2011. Heavy icebreakers are key Coast Guard assets, especially as economic activity in the Arctic expands. The service only has one active icebreaker (the POLAR STAR) with approximately 10 years of service life remaining. The service should be provided with the means to reactivate the POLAR SEA and the requested funds should allow the vessel to be brought up to the same standards as the POLAR STAR, and have an approximate 10 additional years of service.

**2. Title:** Polar Ice Breaking Vessel Acquisition

**Program Description:** Survey and design activities for a new Coast Guard polar icebreaker, intended to provide continued U.S. Arctic icebreaking capability following the projected end of service life of CGC POLAR STAR on or about 2022. This effort will build upon requirements analyses undertaken within the past several years, including the High-Latitude Mission Analysis Report and the Polar Icebreaker Business Case Analysis.

**Fiscal Year 2014 President's Budget Request:** \$2 million



**Additional Amount Requested:** +\$120 million

**Budget Account:** Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard, Acquisition, construction and improvements, Vessels, Polar Ice Breaking Vessel

**Rational:** Additional funds will accelerate the design, development and formulation of an acquisition strategy of a new polar icebreaker to ensure the United States does not lose the capability as the Arctic becomes increasingly important. A new polar icebreaker is critical as existing assets are expected to be retired in 8 to 10 years, and design and construction of a new icebreaker will also take 8 to 10 years. Without action in Fiscal Year 2014, the U.S. may find itself without any icebreakers and with no ability to project sovereignty or execute expanding Coast Guard missions in the Arctic. Original projections provided by the Coast Guard to Congress with the Fiscal Year 2013 budget request showed an original investment of \$120 million in Fiscal Year 2014 for this program.

**3. Title:** Study to Determine Feasibility of User Fee collection in the Land Border Environment

**Program Description:** Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) is in the process of initiating a full study of land border fee options and continues to review collections and cost recovery for the sea environment. CBP will first explore the feasibility of collecting from existing operators such as bridge commissions, toll operators, commercial passenger bus, and commercial passenger rail, as well as any potential legal impediments. In the course of the study, CBP intends to pursue a pilot program that tests all steps to be involved in fee collection short of actual collections without the statutory or regulatory authority to do so. Finally, CBP will follow by assessing how to address land border pedestrians and passenger vehicle fees.

**Bill Language Requested:** None of the funds appropriated in this Act may be used to study, conduct a pilot demonstration program, or collect land border user fees not already authorized in law.

**Budget Account:** Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Patrol, Land Border Inspection Fee

**Rationale:** The impact of a land border crossing fee disrupts day-to-day activities of citizens and will negatively impact commerce and tourism. Furthermore, such a fee would harm the U.S. relationship with bordering countries. The initiation costs and negative economic consequences of such fee collection outweigh any anticipated revenue generated.

**4. Title:** Public-Private Housing Authority

**Report Language Requested:** The Committee is aware the public-private authority provided to the Department of Defense in the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996* has resulted in improved housing for military families. The authority provided allows the Department to work with the private sector to build and renovate

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housing through a variety of financial tools, including: direct loans, loan guarantees, equity investments, and conveyance or leasing of existing properties and facilities. The Committee believes similar authorization for the United States Coast Guard may benefit the agency and members and families of the United States Coast Guard. Therefore, the Committee directs the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to provide a report to the Committee not later than 90 days after enactment of this Act analyzing the potential benefits of public-private housing authority for the United States Coast Guard.

**Rationale:** Public-private partnership authority provided to the Department of Defense has saved the agency money, provided quality homes for military members and their families as well as benefited local economies. Currently, the Coast Guard does not have this authority. Achieving efficiency, cost-savings and providing the highest quality housing to our members of the Coast Guard should remain a priority.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. Please do not hesitate to contact my staff member, Lindsay Kavanaugh, at (202) 224-1924 if additional information is required.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich  
United States Senator